

## Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

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DCS Communications Office

**July 8, 2005**

### The Week Ahead

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**Thurs., July 14** – The Commissioner visits the South Central region.

**Fri., July 15** – The Commissioner visits the Southeast region.

### Southwest Regional Recruitment Unit Extends Community Efforts

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*Submitted by Erica Thomas, Case Manager 3 – Recruitment, Southwest region*

The Southwest Regional Recruitment Unit was present at the Tipton County Juneteenth Celebration on June 18, with an estimated 110-140 adults and 25-30 children and youth in attendance. The recruitment unit set up an informational booth and the emcee at the event assisted in our efforts, mentioning the booth several times, which aided in raising awareness for the department's need for resource homes.

### Friends of Mountain View Golf Tournament Raises \$1,700 for Students

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*Submitted by Steve Collier, Program Coordinator, Mountain View Youth Development Center*

On June 25, the Friends of Mountain View held their annual golf tournament at Dandridge Golf Club in Dandridge, Tenn. The tournament is the primary fundraiser each year for the Friends of Mountain View, the volunteer services Community Involvement Council (CIC). This year's tournament raised \$1,700, which will be used by our CIC to support a variety of volunteer-based student services, activities and community projects.

Over the past three years, the tournament has raised approximately \$5,100 for a plethora of worthwhile student-oriented activities. Mountain View salutes and thanks the many area businesses, organizations and individuals who make this possible each and every year.

The Friends of Mountain View Golf Tournament becomes a reality each year not by accident, but by a lot of hard work, support and dedication from many people. Special recognition goes out to case manager 3/volunteer services supervisor Jennifer Henderson and volunteer coordinator David Bugg for their tireless efforts in coordinating, preparing and securing prizes and sponsors for the tournament. Thanks also to case managers Amy Cotter and Burnette for their help. And last, but not least, thanks to Superintendent Gary Morris and treatment manager

Becky Wester for their continuing support and commitment to the Friends of Mountain View, as well as to the volunteer services program and the many volunteers who freely give their time to help the students at Mountain View Youth Development Center.

## **Juvenile Justice Update**

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*Submitted by Steve Hornsby, Deputy Commissioner, Juvenile Justice*

I wish I had the luxury of doing an in-depth article on any one of several topics that I will just *barely* touch on in this piece, but I think it is more important that this be more of an update. The “sermons” (hope NOT!) can come later. So, topic-by-topic, we’re off to the races.

### **AWOL Apprehension**

A team comprised of Steve Hornsby, Deputy Commissioner, Ken Steverson, Executive Director of Juvenile Justice, Steve Holmes, Director of Internal Affairs, and Debra Valentine, Inspector General, traveled to Atlanta to look at Georgia’s Apprehension Unit on June 15-16. The group learned a lot and got several ideas that we think can help us get our AWOL kids picked up quickly. They include:

- Finalizing the creation of the Apprehension Unit in all three Grand Divisions of the state.
- Developing a training curriculum for the special investigators.
- Legislation to allow DCS to generate its own type of apprehension warrant without going back to court.

We would also like to have the ability to partner with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation to do our own entry into the national Crime Information Center database. We are beginning discussions with the TBI around this issue.

### **Updating Risk Assessment Methodology**

Community safety is critically important to our work. I cannot overemphasize the importance of keeping communities safe. In order to do that, I strongly believe that we must begin to view risk assessment as a *process* rather than a singular, one-time event. If we are asking a judge to allow us to let an offender remain in a community-based, non-secure placement, then we need to be able to have something that we, as well as the court, can rely on in reaching that decision.

Likewise, when we ask a judge to permit reentry of a child back to their community, it should be based on something more substantial *and* clinical, rather than merely saying “Well, he has completed his program...” Just think, if we had an effective assessment tool at the first point of contact with our system and a *really effective* assessment prior to discharge, how effective that could be toward helping us do our jobs, knowing what is actually going on with our kids and whether discharge is appropriate.

Barry Boggs, Ph.D., is taking the lead on helping us do this and we are moving forward. Boggs is the psychologist who developed our current risk assessment, and he is very excited about where we want to go with this. He is comparing several model instruments and should have some recommendations by late summer.

### **Mental Health Care**

There is a growing body of evidence across the country that strongly indicates that juvenile justice facilities house a large number of kids with mental health needs. A 2004 Tennessee study indicates that it could be as high as 80 percent statewide. By virtue of our legislative charge, found in T.C.A. 37-1-101, we have a duty to provide adequate treatment for these kids. As a preliminary step to begin meeting this need, we have created three positions for clinical psychologists to work with the youth development centers and group homes, as well as to interface with the regions to improve our practices in this area. We are still early in the process – interviewing applicants – but we expect to have them in place by September 1, 2005.

We envision these clinicians as real catalysts for moving toward a best practice-based therapeutic model, with one psychologist located in each Grand Division.

### **Juvenile Justice Path to Excellence**

Our Juvenile Justice Path to Excellence team convened and had its first meeting on May 20. It was an excellent meeting and a variety of viewpoints were shared. We formed work groups and selected domain areas for excellence. The first draft of domain workgroups will be presented later in July. A final product is expected by October. Juvenile justice staff very clearly expressed their feelings of frustrations over the past several years and their commitment to improving our department.

Some great ideas are already emerging, such as:

- Creation of a juvenile justice newsletter dedicated to promoting performance-based best practices.
- Employee recognition awards.
- Regional-based juvenile justice “spokespersons” to enhance relationships with regional administrators, regional juvenile justice staff and Central Office.

### **Fall Retreat**

100 lucky juvenile justice team members will be chosen to spend November 1-5 at beautiful Fall Creek Falls State Park at the fall retreat. The retreat planning committee is meeting regularly and has taken your suggestions from the previous retreats and is using them to create an agenda that will be informative, productive and exciting.

The theme is “Team Excellence in Juvenile Justice”. Topics will include identifying your team, modern correctional treatment philosophy, mental health diagnostics and working with families.

Since this is in the middle of football season, everyone is encouraged to wear his or her team gear. Prizes will be awarded for the most creative outfits! Put your game face on!

## CQI: What Does It Stand For?

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*Submitted by Ted Slifer, Program Coordinator, QA/CQI Division*

What does CQI stand for? We all know that it stands for Continuous Quality Improvement. Suppose we give the letter C a different meaning. Let’s say that the C stands for Communication. We then have **Communication Quality Improvement** – improvement in the quality of communication at DCS. Communication is an integral part – an essential part – of the whole CQI problem-solving process.

Regardless of the job being performed, effectiveness is determined by the ability to communicate. Traditionally, in literature, management has often measured the effectiveness of its communication in terms of how well directives were given and how well they were understood. There is now a greater awareness of the importance and value of obtaining feedback from employees.

Within the department, open and two-way communication plays a major role in the attainment of agency and individual goals. A climate with open, two-way communication is sought to improve the opportunity for higher productivity (safety and well-being of children as measured by outcomes) and greater employee identification with DCS goals and vision. The facets of open and two-way communication directly affect the highly sought for Continuous Quality Improvement process of enhancing our ability to solve problems and remove/reduce barriers to high quality performance.

Facets of open communication include an atmosphere of trust toward each other that is non-defensive in nature; an environment that is respectful, cooperative and courteous, in which everyone who has a need or wish to speak can do so with an equal say; where each person’s beliefs, thoughts and opinions are important; and where each idea is considered.

Facets of two-way communication include communication from bottom up as well as from top down, the opportunity to make suggestions or inquiries and receive a reply, as well as to influence decisions on how work is done, the importance of feedback and the sharing of information.

Quality communication is directly related to and enhances Continuous Quality Improvement. All DCS employees at all levels should strive to achieve open and two-way communication to the highest possible degree – that is to strive for Communication Quality Improvement.



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***A dream becomes a goal when action is taken toward its achievement.*** – Bo  
Bennett

***The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.*** –  
Eleanor Roosevelt



